

Pamela Joiner, mother of a homicide victim
In Support of SB 280

I am writing as the mother of a murder victim in support of SB 280 to repeal the death penalty.

In 2008 my son Jumar was shot and killed. There is no way to describe the pain of losing a child to murder.

Sometimes when people talk about the death penalty they will say that we need to keep the death penalty for "the worst of the worst". If this statement didn't make me so mad, I might be able to laugh at how absurd it is. It's like saying that there are some murders that aren't the worst of the worst. For me, as a mother, losing my child is the worst. And I'm sure if you lost someone you loved, it would be the worst.

So why do we try to classify? If we're going to have the death penalty and use it so infrequently, we have to try to explain this crap shoot. I hate that the death penalty forces us to distinguish between losses. For someone to tell me that the death of my son wasn't the worst of the worst is like a slap in the face. I've already taken too many hits, I don't need that as well.

The year Jumar was killed there were 112 homicides in Connecticut. That's 112 mothers. Each of us deserves to be heard and helped. Not brushed under the rug because our cases weren't the "worst of the worst".

Our stories are rarely heard and far too often our needs go unaddressed. It is shameful that we spent millions of dollars and countless hours on a few capital cases when there are so many of us with so many needs unmet. The death penalty is used in less than 2% of all homicides, but 100% of us have real needs. Murder is the worst of the worst.

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